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ABSTRACT

Since the size of the small school presents difficulties in implementation of in-service programs, program development should be carefully considered. Initially, faculty support must be gained via: (1) careful needs assessment; (2) solicitation and utilization of outside consultants (from universities, the Department of Public Instruction, and/or the new Area Education Agencies); (3) public recognition of quality faculty performance; and (4) public recognition of the fact that time spent outside the classroom is not "free time" but rather "preparation time". A wide range of activities should be planned to accomodate individual and school interests and needs. Though not exhaustive, the following are indicative of possible activity directions and/or coordination: (1) well planned faculty meetings for which both administrators and teachers are prepared; (2) thoroughly planned workshops; (3) organized visitations to other schools; (4) both formal and informal professional study (course work, meetings, etc.); (5) consistent, on-going evaluation of teachers, administrators, and the school program; (6) membership and participation in professional organizations; (7) management by objectives (mutual predetermined goals); and (8) contributions to curriculum improvement (development of guides, courses, etc.). (JC)

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SMALL SCHOOL CONFERENCE

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PRE-CONFERENCE PAPER

for

SMALL SCHOOLS

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

March 21-22, 1975

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IN-SERVICE
IN THE
SMALL SCHOOL

Borrowing again from the Encyclopedia of Educational Research the following quote is rather significant.

> "...Most areas of weakness were found in schools where the size of the staff was small, and more areas of strength in school systems with a large staff. The larger school systems have better facilities for in-service education than do small school systems."

The Planning Committee for the Second Annual Iowa Small School Conference considered several areas of the research on small schools and finally adopted the area of in-service as one where it was thought a real contribution could be made toward the improvement of the small school. This is not to say that all small schools have inferior in-service programs, but that the very nature of the small school often makes this a difficult problem to solve.

The administrator in the small school seldom has the wide range of specialized personnel to help in the development of an in-service program. As a result, the superintendent and/or principal is the director of activities, personnel officer, business manager, curriculum coordinator, pupil personnel director, and takes care of all administrative duties that are usually delegated to other persons in a larger system. These many duties leave limited time to devote to a well organized in-service program for the instructional and non-instructional personnel of the school.

At the same time, there are limited opportunities for a professional exchange of ideas in a small school. With the exceptions of possibly the areas of English, social studies, mathematics, and science, many small schools have mostly one-person departments. Thus, the home economics or business education teacher may be the only one in the community with that speciality and thus the exchange of ideas is generally non-existent. In such a situation consultants from outside sources are difficult to justify in economic terms unless generalists rather than specialists are used.

PLANNING THE PROGRAM

Perhaps the first step for the small school in establishing an in-service program is to gain the support of the entire faculty for it. As long as in-service is considered as a "chore" or a "necessary evil" the chances of success are very doubtful. However, if it is accepted as an opportunity for professional and personal growth, the success potential will be greatly enhanced. How then, can support be gained?

The "big four" in gaining support for the program are: NEED, TIME, ASSISTANCE, and RECOGNITION! Let's consider each of these briefly.

NEEDS: Needs are not "dreamed up" by an administrator. The needs are there--the problem is to identify them. The needs start with a deficiency in the program and these deficiencies are traced back to the instruction which if improved will rectify the deficiency. Thus, the starting point is a needs assessment of some sort which will identify the large areas of needs in a school and pinpoint potential ways to correct them. In this small schools conference there will be presentations on this phase of the program in which a school involved in this type of needs assessment will report its experiences and the Iowa Department of Public Instruction will give guidelines for such a program.

ASSISTANCE: Limited personnel planning time in the small school make outside assistance highly desirable. This may take the form of personnel to help in the planning and/or to act as consultants, instructors and resource persons once the program is underway. Personnel and assistance may come from Universities, Department of Public Instruction, or the new Area Education Agencies. The services from these three agencies will be included in the program so you will know what can be expected from these sources.

RECOGNITION: While the real professional works primarily for the satisfaction of doing a good job, recognition for doing a good job reinforces that satisfaction. Thus, it is highly desirable for provisions to be built into an in-service plan for recognition of particularly good work. This recognition may take the form of meeting "barrier points" on a salary scale, opportunities for sharing experiences with colleagues, reports to the board of education, special recognition on the salary schedule (a plan now afforded to coaches for extra work) and other suitable plans that say, "thank you for a job well done."

TIME: The problems of in-service are compounded in the small schools by the time demands on the faculty members who "double in brass" ie. spread themselves over a wide range of responsibilities. One phase of a program to find adequate time is an information program for the community to convince the patrons of the school that the teacher is "working" when carrying on professional activities outside the classroom. Too many people have the mistaken idea that a teacher is working only when she is in front of a formal class. "Preparation time" is too often thought of as "free time" by the public and steps need to be taken to correct these misconceptions felt by the general public.

Faculty members also need to accept the idea that for their professional improvement that they should be willing to invest some of "Their time" while the school invests some of the "company time" on an in-service program. If carefully worked out the school board will

probably go along with more "company time" in the form of in-service days, early dismissal, and provision for substitudes, if the faculty spend a little extra personal time before school, on occasional weekends, and in a cooperative program in "covering" other teacher's classes when they are engaged in in-service activities.

IN-SERVICE ACTIVITIES

The planning of an in-service program should include a wide range of activities to meet the variety of needs for the different aspects of the instructional programs and the individual needs of the teachers involved in the instructional process. The following is not an exhaustive list but it does give some suggestions that a planning group may wish to consider. It must be recognized that no one school will utilize all the activities that are available, but through a selective process a combination of activities will be organized which will best serve the purposes of a given school with its own unique set of in-service needs and programs.

FACULTY MEETINGS: Faculty meetings are usually recommended highly and used frequently as an in-service activity, but they do not always achieve significant results. Many teachers become disenchanted with this device because of many factors and probably the prominent of these is the lack of preparation for the meeting. Too often the faculty meeting is an "off-the-cuff" type of thing in which the administrator violates every instructional principle "in the book." After all, the administrator is a teacher of teachers and the basis of a faculty meeting should not be "do as I say--not as I do."

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS: The workshop is generally considered as a means by which a group of teachers work together cooperatively in the identification and solution of educational problems. Again, planning is of utmost importance as considerable unproductive time can be spent in an instructured workshop that has ill defined objectives. These can take the form of pre-school workshops or may be during the regular school year.

VISITATIONS: Some research studies on teacher perceptions of in-service activities have rated visitations to other schools as one of the most valuable yet, at the same time, there is evidence to show that this is a seldom-used device. Some systems carry on an organized visitation program within their own schools while others concentrate on visitations to other schools. Again, planning is a major factor in success of the program, as teachers planning a visitation need to know what they are looking for and where to go in order to find it.

PROFESSIONAL STUDY: Both formal and informal professional study provides opportunities for growth. Evening and summer classes for graduate credit are usually the most popular of these activities

are usually recognized on salary schedules. Some schools have developed approved programs on in-service which give barrier points for certificate renewal and for steps on the salary schedule.

Informal activities include such things as reading, discussion groups, seminars, attendance to meetings, and educational exchanges. Very often these are up to the individual teacher, but encouragement can add much to these informal activities.

EVALUATION: Seldom do people, organizations, or programs improve unless there is a consistent and on-going evaluation program in operation. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the individual (both teachers and administrators) is the first line of evaluation and this can be expanded to an evaluation of the school and its program. Both the North Central Association and the State Department of Public Instruction offer evaluation services for a school program. These are basically oriented toward an improvement of the program and neither agency is concerned with the inspectional aspects of such evaluations.

One aspect of this will come out of the new legislation (Senate File 126) which requires each school to complete a needs assessment, establish objectives and priorities, and report progress to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. This legislation has real potential in the improvement of public school education in Iowa if schools will take full advantage of this plan and do it in a meaningful way.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: Membership and participation in professional organizations do overlap with some of the other activities (meetings, reading, etc.) but this phase of in-service does merit separate recognition. This is not aimed at the teacher union type of organization as it serves a different function. It is organizations such as the National Council for Social Studies, National Association of Secondary School Principals, and other such organizations which has a major thrust for improving the professional competencies of the membership through publications, meetings, committee work, and other types of activities.

MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES: One of the more recent devices for in-service education programs is the concept of management by objectives. In this plan a professional worker defines some very specific goals with results that can be observed. Through this device a teacher and administrator are able to agree on goals and give mutual assistance in achieving them.

CURRICULUM WORK: Possibly the most productive types of in-service activities are those that provide an opportunity for faculty members to make contributions to the improvement of the instructional program. The activities may cover any aspect of the total curricular program and curriculum is defined here as all portions of the planned experiences for children. Curriculum guides, planning new courses, developing curriculum materials, administrative designs for curricular programs, other aspects are included in this type of activity.

POT POURI

Here are some quotes from the Encyclopedia of Educational Research (Third Edition) that may be of interest to educators from small schools.

* The smallness of rural schools results in relatively low student-teacher ratio . . . about 47% of rural high school teachers had fewer than 20 students whereas less than 18% of urban teachers had so few.

* Many studies have shown the higher comparative costs per pupil in small schools. It has been indicated that the cost per pupil in elementary schools decreased greatly up to an enrollment of 100 pupils and to less marked degree up to 200 pupils. In high schools the cost per pupil decreased rapidly up to 200 pupils and continues to decrease, but not so rapidly, up to 500 pupils.

* Traditionally the salaries of teachers in rural schools have been less than the salaries of urban teachers, but recent changes have gradually narrowed the gap.

* The qualifications of rural teachers as measured by years of college preparation have not at any time compared favorably with the qualifications of urban teachers....some progress has been made in raising the level of requirements.

* Providing the leadership necessary to improve the educational program is not a small or simple task. In most instances the administrator in the small community is the chief administrative officer and is responsible for budgets, buildings, discipline, guidance, public relations, purchasing, financial accounting, inventories, instructional supervision, teacher selection, and the whole range of administrative duties.

* Experiments and studies have emphasized that deviations from traditional teaching methods in small high schools have resulted in an increase in student interest and achievement and a decrease in disciplinary problems.

* The significant conclusion has been that the extent to which the small secondary school can economically enrich its curriculum will depend largely on the extent to which it abandons blind imitation of larger schools and develops those methods and techniques most likely to make possible a realization of the purposes of secondary education in small schools.

1975 IOWA SMALL SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

Friday, March 21, 1975

6:00 p.m. Dinner Meeting, East Dining Room, Redeker Center
David Gilliland, President-Elect of REA will speak on "Senate File 126 Evaluation of Educational Program and Small Schools."

Saturday, March 22, 1975

9:00 a.m. Registration - Coffee--Education Center Lobby

9:30 a.m. Welcome - Education Center 247
North Central Association
Tom Wilkie, Superintendent, Sibley
NCA Small School Committee
Rural Education Association
Dr. Calvin Bones, Superintendent
Area Education Agency XIII, Council Bluffs
Iowa REA State Reporter
University of Northern Iowa
Dean Howard Knutson, College of Education
University of Northern Iowa

9:45 a.m. "In-Service Education and Evaluation in the Small School" a multi-media presentation

10:00 a.m. "Elementary School In-Service and Evaluation"
Mrs. Joan Diamond, Price Laboratory School
Chairman NCA Elementary Self-Study Committee

10:50 a.m. Late Coffee

11:00 a.m. "Secondary School Self-Study and Evaluation"
Lynn McBride, Reinbeck High School English Teacher and Study Chairman

NOON Down-the-line lunch at Towers Dining Center

1:00 p.m. "Area Education Agency Plans for In-Service Education and Needs Assessment"--Perry Grier, Superintendent, Area Education Agency VII, Cedar Falls

2:00 p.m. "You Ask the Experts" (large group and then small group discussion)

3:00 p.m. On the road home after coffee and conversation